

Regional Council Activity Report

March 8, 1999

Briefing to Member Agencies from Executive Director James M. Bourey



Executive Director's Report

There are many exciting developments to report in the transportation arena, as we complete work on the draft 2000-2004 Transportation Improvement Program and Long Range Transportation Plan. Due in part to the significant increase in federal transportation funding under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), MAG has developed and released a proposed acceleration schedule for the freeway system and other important projects. This accelerated schedule would result in completion of the Regional Freeway System by 2007 — seven years earlier than planned.

The Regional Transportation System Plan is, however, based on a number of financing assumptions. Among these assumptions is that the state would be able to borrow up to \$400 million dollars from itself through financing mechanisms such as the State Infrastructure Bank (SIB), the Highway Expansion and Extension Loan Program (HELP), or Grant Anticipation Notes (GANs).

These financing methods can not be utilized, however, unless state lawmakers first approve critical legislation. House Bill 2572, which would enable the state to borrow the money, is expected to pass in the House, but will likely face a stiff challenge in the Senate. We would strongly encourage cities to work very actively with lawmakers on this legislation, which would assist in delivering the accelerated freeway system to the voters in their districts.

We also continue to seek your support in opposing HB 2181, which calls for the creation of an Urban Planning Division within ADOT to develop a regional transportation plan. The intent of the bill is to reassign many of the transportation planning functions of MAG and give them to the state. As we have mentioned previously, there are multiple problems with HB 2181 related to consistency with federal regulations, involvement of local decision makers in the transportation planning process, and creation of a process which establishes another level of bureaucracy within ADOT to duplicate work mandated to MAG. The legislation does not comply with federal law and would jeopardize federal transportation funds available to the region. I urge you to rigorously oppose this bill.

There are also many items of interest to report on Census 2000 efforts. As the representative of the International City/County Management Association on the U.S. Commerce Secretary Census 2000 Advisory Committee, I have had two recent opportunities to testify before a Congressional Subcommittee on census issues important to local governments. There are four major issues which warrant attention: how to tabulate and report race choices; the Master Address File update; statistical adjustments to actual counts; and post-census local review. Here is a quick synopsis of the issues and actions to date in each of those areas.

- Prior to the upcoming Census, individuals had a single choice on race, with no option for those who consider themselves multiracial. Census 2000 will provide an option for those who want to select multiple categories on race. This option, however, initially created a dilemma in how to report and tabulate those results so that totals do not exceed 100% of those counted. The Office of Management and Budget has now produced guidelines for how that reporting and tabulation will take place.
- Local governments have been involved in updating the Master Address File, which originated with a U.S. Post Office address list. Of concern is the fact that local input on this list occurs more than a year prior to the Census, meaning many residents who move into an area in the intervening period would be missed. I have been actively pursuing a method by which the Census Bureau can further update this list just prior to Spring 2000. I believe we have now worked out a methodology that will successfully allow local governments to provide input and update this list just before Census questionnaires are mailed.
- The most controversial issue to date has been the Census Bureau's proposal to use statistical sampling in Census 2000, a debate which ultimately ended up before the Supreme Court. In a split 5/4 decision, the High Court ruled that a statistical sampling adjustment was not allowed for purposes of Congressional reapportionment. However, the Court left the door open and even implied that statistical sampling could be used to develop the most accurate count for actual congressional redistricting, distribution of federal assistance, and other purposes.
- A final important Census issue is that of post-census local review. The 1990 Census allowed for local governments to review preliminary housing counts and provide recommended adjustments. This resulted in

many more housing units, and thus more population, being counted. The Census Bureau's operational plan does NOT allow for post-census review in the 2000 Census. This should be extremely concerning to local governments, and I will continue advocacy on the part of our cities to get this issue resolved.



Regional Council Meeting Report for February 24, 1999

Proposed Project Acceleration Schedule Gets First Review in Study Session

From the addition of HOV lanes on the Superstition, to eight grade-separate interchanges on Grand Avenue, Regional Council members got their first comprehensive look at the list of proposed accelerated freeway projects during the Council's study session February 24th. The completed list is the result of months of planning and research conducted by MAG, with input from the cities and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT). Although now scheduled for completion many months or years ahead of schedule, the freeway projects will be completed in the exact same order as the current program. The Council is expected to vote on the program for air quality conformity analysis at its next regular meeting.

For more information, contact Eric Anderson, MAG Freeway Program Manager, 470-1107.

Annual Report Provides Insight on Freeway Program

In 1991, a performance audit recommended that MAG become more involved and accountable for activities surrounding the construction of the Regional Freeway Program. MAG now provides a yearly fiscal analysis of the Program, which examines anticipated freeway construction projects, their projected cost, and scheduled dates of completion. In the "1999 Annual Report on MAG Regional Freeway Program," MAG detailed a number of major events which took place in 1998. First was the adoption of a new material change policy. Prior to 1998, MAG reviewed all changes to the Program, from \$15,000 to \$5 million. Under the new policy, MAG only looks at those projects in which significant material changes are made.

Also in 1998, MAG became actively involved in a fair share funding analysis which looked at the ratio of taxes collected and how much comes back to Maricopa County. The analysis found that MAG was receiving only about 10.5 percent of federal and state funds distributed by the State, instead of the 35 percent it should receive under the "fair share" concept.

The report found that the Program has been in fiscal balance since 1992, and that construction schedules have been met. However, it also found that there have been tremendous cost increases. Construction costs alone, not including design or right-of-way costs, now average \$20 million dollars per mile. Revenue has not increased, which means cash balances have been drawn down significantly, and cash flows are being watched very carefully. In the 1999 Report, MAG recommended that a system for developing better cost estimates be implemented to prevent such situations from reoccurring. MAG recommended several ways of accomplishing this, including: 1) to accelerate the 30 percent General Plan Level Design Phase; 2) to coordinate better with Environmental Processes; and 3) to mitigate design changes after General Plan completion.

MAG also recommended in the report the need for a Consolidated State Highway Program. This program would include all State Highway System projects and vest responsibility and authority with a single point of contact. MAG also suggested developing long-term funding estimates for the balance of the 20-year plan so that it may better plan long-term freeway projects. Finally, staff recommended extending the horizon of the Life Cycle Program to eliminate confusion between the ADOT Life Cycle Program and the MAG Long Range Transportation Plan. The system is to be completed within 15 years and all projects needed to complete the Regional Freeway System should be included. For more information, contact Eric Anderson, MAG Freeway Program Manager, 470-1107.

Cities Accelerate Projects by Providing Own Funding

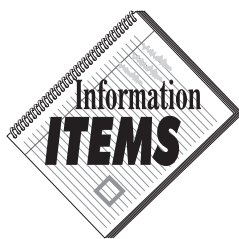
The Regional Council approved two projects brought forward by the cities of Phoenix and Mesa for acceleration under city financing mechanisms. The City of Phoenix will advance the completion of the west half of the traffic interchange at the junction of I-10, Santan and South Mountain Corridors. Using funds obtained under a Grant Anticipation Note, the project would be completed by June 2001, rather than the originally proposed date of December 2004. The City of Mesa proposed to advance the completion of the Gilbert Road to Higley segment of the Red Mountain Freeway to May 2003 (from May 2005). Under this proposal, Mesa would use funding from a Grant Anticipation Note to advance right-of-way and construction by 24 months. Both proposals passed unanimously. For more information, contact Eric Anderson, MAG Freeway Program Manager, 470-1107.



Upcoming Issues:

Public Input Sought on Regional Domestic Violence Plan

The MAG Domestic Violence Subcommittee is finalizing draft recommendations to be included in a Regional Domestic Violence Plan. These recommendations will be distributed to the public in the next three weeks for review, comment and input. MAG will be soliciting input through a variety of methods, including direct mail and through the MAG Web site at www.mag.maricopa.gov. During the last week of March, the Domestic Violence Subcommittee plans to televise its meeting on the Phoenix Channel, (Cable Channel 11), to request further public comment and participation. For more information, contact Carol Kratz, MAG Human Services Manager, (602) 254-6300.



Information Items:

Valley Vision 2025 Members Focus on Improvement

The March 3rd meeting of the Valley Vision 2025 Committee was postponed, to give a study group more time to look at ways to retool the process. Over the past few months, many members of the Committee have expressed concern about the progress of the visioning effort. While many collaborative groups have received exceptional input from their communities, others have met with limited success. Two recent strategy sessions have been held to address how to ensure the process is broad-based, representative and credible, and that adequate resources are available. These sessions have already produced significant results, including consensus for a vision document model as well as ideas for redefining the process to duplicate that model. Some exciting recommendations are expected when the full Committee meets again April 7th.

For more information, contact Kelly Taft, MAG Public Communications Program Manager, (602) 452-5080, or James M. Bourey, MAG Executive Director, (602) 254-6300.



Upcoming Events:

MAG to Sponsor Y2K Forum

The Maricopa Association of Governments was asked during a meeting of City Managers to convene a forum dealing with issues surrounding the Year 2000 computer problem. Rather than focusing only on the technical aspects of this issue, the purpose of the forum will be to share ideas, information, and potential actions for dealing with the many logistical, communication and human issues involved in addressing this problem within your communities. Any ideas or input you have on this issue prior to this forum are appreciated. A date has not yet been set, but expect to receive notice for this event sometime within the next 30-45 days.

For more information, contact Kelly Taft, MAG Public Communications Program Manager, (602) 452-5020.

Next Regional Council Meeting

The next Regional Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 24, 1999 at 5:00 p.m. Among the agenda items will be acceptance of the MAG Transportation Improvement Program and Long Range Transportation Plan for Conformity Analysis. The Clean Air Act requires that all transportation programs be in conformance with air quality plans. If the TIP and LRTP are approved, they would be sent on for a conformity analysis. The programs would likely be brought back to the Council in June for final approval. Other anticipated agenda items are consideration and possible approval of the Accelerated MAG Freeway Program and State Highway System; recommendations concerning the Federal Fiscal Year 1999 MAG Federal Funds Preliminary Closeout and potential project additions to the current federal fiscal year; and review of public input gathered through the FY 1999 MAG Mid-Phase Public Input Opportunity Report.

For more information, contact Dennis Smith, MAG Assistant Director, (602) 254-6300.